

Changing
the world
one
child
at a time

MAKENA Musings

Newsletter of MAKENA Children's Foundation, Inc.

Spring 2022 Vol. 22, No. 3

JAMBO



A Message
from the
President

Anne Batzer

One of the many joys of doing the work of the Makena Children's Foundation is witnessing our Kenyan young people mature. They grow from shy, self-conscious children into adults who clarify their own values, know their own minds and voice their own opinions. They respect their elders and graciously receive the respect they know they deserve. This is the value of a good education. Beautiful! To see what I mean, please enjoy reading the messages of gratitude we received from our two most recent university graduates.

Another joy is experiencing Kenyan traditions, similar and yet so different from our own. Cross-cultural exchange is our constant source of learning and wonder. We are so pleased to share the marriage ceremonies of Makena alumnus Samson Machohi. Samson and Matilda brought a modern sensibility to their participation in long-established tribal rites. Their celebratory Kenyan spirit is contagious.

As you know, we want to educate those children who have no chance of a decent education without our help, so each child brought into the Makena Children's Foundation is either orphaned or has a single parent. This means all of the Makena Kids have experienced profound loss at a tender age. We are exceptionally proud of each and every one of our students. In this issue of Musings we highlight two boys who astonish us with their academic success.

We live in a world where international bridges built of curiosity, understanding and delight are vital. For 25 years you---our Makena sponsors and donors---have constructed and maintained a strong span with our Kenyan families. We honor and relish the strength of these ties, connecting Americans and Kenyans, recognizing our common humanity.

Expressions of Gratitude

Two of our recent university graduates reflect on their educations in these statements.

John Njoroge completed his Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture at Embu University.

"I have a lot of fond memories of the Makena Children's Foundation since I joined as a child. I was naive and innocent then and it was the time I was starting to learn English. Sherri (Makena Founder) was the first 'Mzungu' (white person) I got to talk to, except for an occasional 'how are you?' to passing tourists.

I remember my replies to her questions were just 'yes' and 'no.' Occasionally, I would construct a sentence or two based on my understanding. She smiled a lot at my young self and that kept me assured that I was in good hands.

Well, that was my first introduction to the world outside my locale. Since then it was like a dream, like an eagle spreading its wings and soaring up into the sky.

The journey has been long since then. I got to know the world and how it functions. I got to know that people are not always as nice as she was to me. I got to know that the world works on the basis of benefits.

Even so, I got to know that there are selected few that make an exception to that norm and help others improve lives for no personal gain.

'Making the world a better place, one child at a time.' Sometimes I wondered what that slogan meant and only came to realize much later that this involves the inheritance of a certain spirit. I call it the Makena spirit: a willingness to assist in your capacity and believe in a better tomorrow.

Going through schooling under your care was my greatest blessing. Whatever lies ahead may be unknown but I will strive hard. I will also maintain the Makena spirit to the best of my ability. You have illuminated a previously uncertain future and made it one of endless possibilities."

Duncan Kahoro completed his Bachelor's Degree in Education Arts at Moi University.

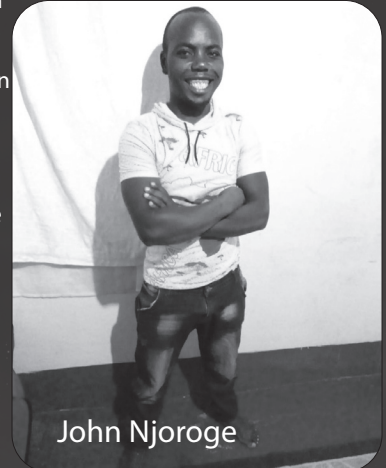
"So much can be said about the goodness and the great, wonderful people running the Makena Children's Foundation. The foundation has been pivotal and of great importance to the many children who dreamed of having an education but could not afford it.

Through the foundation, the children have been able to acquire the education one could only dream of and become reliable, reasonable, independent individuals in society. In short, the Makena Children's Foundation has been able to put a smile on the face of the crying child, dying for an education. I am so proud to say that I am one of the luckiest crying children whose smile has been restored through the educational journey provided by this magical, wonderful foundation.

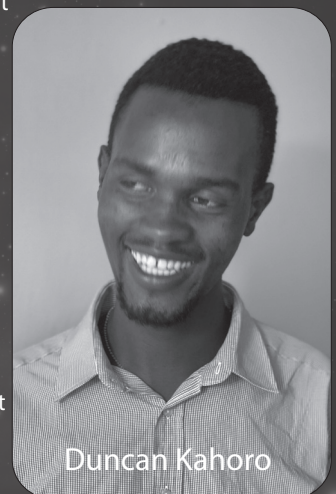
I am so grateful and saying a lot of thanks to the Makena Children's Foundation for being there and facilitating my education from the primary level to the tertiary level. You made sure that I lacked nothing while in school, as well at home. This enabled me to chase my dream which I can say is now a dream come true. The foundation has been a home to me where my worries have been taken care of. May the foundation remain to be a home for many!

I cannot forget about my amazing sponsors and the marvelous, unselfish, kind and caring board of directors who are working day and night to see the foundation is running smoothly and achieving its purpose. Anne: thank you so much for being a mom to me and to the many children under the foundation where your motherly bond is always felt.

Having finished my university education am looking forward for a job as a high school teacher. Thank you."



John Njoroge



Duncan Kahoro

Outstanding Students

We are proud of each and every one of our students. Most of our students received an A grade---and none of our students received anything lower than a B---for important behavior issues: things like self-discipline, cooperation, honesty and effort. All of them are strong representatives of Makena values.

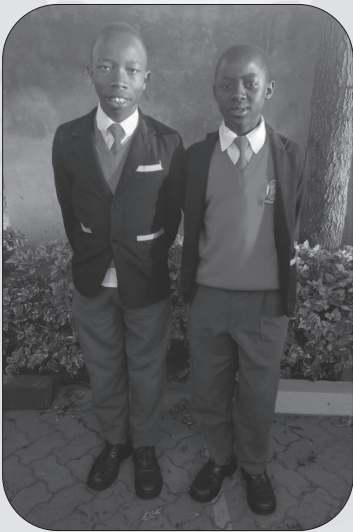
In this issue we want to spotlight two boys who are academic stars.

Because his mother suffered from both physical and mental health issues, Harun Maina’s early life was characterized by itinerant homelessness. With his mother, he wandered the Kenyan countryside, sleeping on the ground next to her. Food was scarce. Harun did not attend school. When his mother died, her body was discovered deep in a Kenyan forest. Harun was taken in by an aunt and uncle who were already caring for their adult daughter who has autism. He started school at the age of 8.

From the very beginning of his life at Lizar School in Naivasha, Harun has shown his leadership skills. He was elected a class prefect by his classmates. And his grades this term put him in position 5 out of 32 students. Harun says getting these grades is not easy. He spends break time studying, instead of relaxing, so he can fulfill his dream of becoming “an important person.” Harun hopes to one day be a doctor.

Andrey Mungai and his two siblings lost their father when he was 5 years old. His hardworking mother got a job in Naivasha’s flower farms, but had to quit because of severe allergies to the chemicals used in growing the flowers. With odd jobs her only option, she struggled to provide food for her three children. Her extreme poverty prompted a bout of depression.

Makena manager Charles Karanja and his family responded with help to this desperation. He immediately recognized Andrey’s potential and, when the timing was right, brought him into the Foundation’s family. Andrey has not disappointed. He says his goal is to “change his family’s life for the better.” He attributes his commitment to always revising his work when he makes a mistake for getting the grades that place him in position 3 out of 34 students. Andrey hopes one day to become a mechanical engineer.



Harun Maina and
Andrey Mungai

True Love at First Sight

By Mary Jo Baich

Makena alumnus Samson Machohi says he noticed Matilda Mumbua, “a beautiful young lady who warmed my heart” in February 2019 while both attended a Kenyan Agricultural and Livestock Workshop. It was not until the last day of the workshop that Samson had the courage to introduce himself, asking if they could meet later. That evening they both confessed they were quite smitten with each other and two weeks later they began dating. By December 2020 they told their families they were ready for marriage and desired to accommodate both the traditions of her tribe (Kamba) and his tribe (Kikuyu). Samson was given a list of dowry items he should pay over the lifetime of the marriage. In times past, the dowry included live goats, cows and supplies of food such as maize, beans, bananas and honey. Now, a monetary value is given to each of these items.

Samson, his grandmother and uncle, formally visited Matilda’s parents and younger brother in February 2021 and settled on a July wedding date. The months before the wedding ceremonies were filled with attending premarital classes and raising money via WhatsApp to pay for hosting their wedding and guests. Even their friends joined in helping them organize all the elements of the ceremonies.



In May Samson’s family traveled to Matilda’s hometown (over 100 miles) for their traditional Kamba wedding (ntheo). It is the groom’s family responsibility to cook the wedding dinner, but because of the long distance, it was catered. Prior to the ceremony and dinner, the bride and groom wait outside while selected representatives from each family negotiate the final dowry. When an agreement is reached, the couple is invited in to exchange vows and to share a plate of fried goat meat. Interestingly, the following day the families gathered for the “pre wedding” at the bride’s family’s church.

On July 31, 2021, 150 family members and friends came together for the official wedding ceremony held in Thika. Following the reception Matilda and Samson enjoyed a coastal honeymoon in Diani. Both of them are now pursuing their Masters degrees, she in Entrepreneurship and he in Information Technology Management. Samson says, “Matilda is not only my wife and partner, but also my best friend”.

Kenya’s New Education System

By Mary Jo Baich

Kenya is implementing a new education system called Competency Based Curriculum (CBC). To better understand this new system, the Makena Board of Directors had a Zoom meeting with the administrators of the elementary school where our students attend, Lizar School in Naivasha. Administrators Eunice Mwangi and Simon Njogu explained that this new system replaces the current system where a student’s ability to attend high school and university was totally dependent on one test at the end of elementary school and another test at the end of high school. Instead, periodic testing will be coupled with evaluation of classroom performance. Nine “learning areas” will combine with these areas of evaluation, including communication, collaboration, critical thinking and digital learning. This exciting modernization of the educational system includes computer education and special needs programs. Makena’s three newest students will learn under this new system.



Lizar School Administrators Simon
Njogu and Eunice Mwangi

Another year of 4 semesters!

By Mary Jo Baich

This decree has been handed down by the Kenyan Department of Education.

In Kenya the school year, beginning in January, usually consists of three months attendance, then a holiday, repeating three times.

But with so much class time lost due to the pandemic, the 2022 school year will again have four semesters.

This is a huge increase in the amount it will cost the Makena Children's Foundation for school fees. Some of our sponsors can cover these additional charges and some cannot. We need to cover these costs so our students can stay within their grade level---so we turn to YOU!

Please send a donation to help lighten this financial burden.



Sponsorships do not cover all of our costs.
Please help us with a donation to keep our students in school.

Make your tax-deductible donation TODAY, payable to
Makena Children's Foundation, Inc.,
711 Medford Center, #117, Medford, OR 97504.

- ☐ I wish to sponsor a Makena student with a gift of \$2,000 annually.
- ☐ I wish to lend a hand to the smooth operation of the Makena Children's Foundation with a gift of:
☐\$50 ☐\$100 ☐\$200 ☐\$400 ☐\$600 ☐\$1000
- ☐ You have permission to mention my support in your publication(s).
- ☐ I prefer to make my gift anonymously.
- ☐ I am unable to contribute now, but please keep me informed about the work of Makena Children's Foundation.
- ☐ I would like to share my story relating to Africa or my sponsored child.
Please contact me by phone ☐ or by e-mail ☐.

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip_____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____

Parent Meeting

Following our tradition, each of the Makena families received a gift of \$25.00 at Christmas time. These funds can be distributed through Kenya's phone system, a good alternative for people who do not have bank accounts. But our families requested they meet in person, instead, to receive the gift and share a meal. The mutual support, help and fun the families have together has created a vigorous community bond. We are so proud of our families for the creative ways they constantly find to help each other.



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If you'd like to help bring the priceless gift of education to deserving children, please complete the form inside and send your donation TODAY.



Helping Our Alumni

Getting a job in Kenya has never been easy. And the pandemic has increased the challenge for some of our recent alumni. In February, Makena Country Director Francis Nijirani, Kenya Liaison Manager Charles Karanja and President Anne Batzer met through Zoom to address this issue. They agreed to establish a Makena Alumni Career Coaching Program to connect our young adults with professionals who can help. We'll keep you posted about this committee and its work.



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